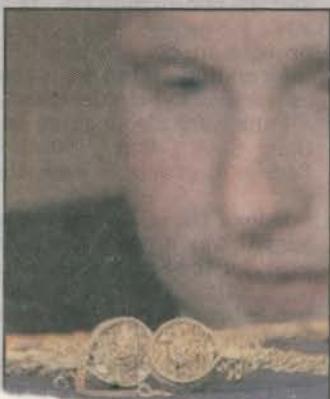


NATIONAL & WORLD BRIEFING

Taleban link to soldier killings

THE Taleban has claimed responsibility for the killing of five British soldiers by a rogue Afghan policeman.

Warrant Officer Darren Chant, Sgt Matthew Telford, Guardsman James Major, Acting Cpl Steven Boote and Cpl Nicholas Webster-Smith, died when the officer turned his gun on them at a checkpoint in Nad-e-Ali in Helmand Province on Tuesday. Another six British soldiers and two Afghan policemen were wounded in the shooting, which sent shockwaves through the coalition mission in Afghanistan.



Basildon will get housing millions

By SOPHIE EDWARDS

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BASILDON should now get £142million to bring its council homes up to scratch following a Government U-turn.

In a letter to Billericay MP John Baron, the housing minister John Healey gave a firm commitment to St George's Community Housing that it would get the £142m it was promised.

St George's, which manages Basildon Council's 12,900 homes on its behalf, was in line for the millions after it achieved a two-star rating following a Government inspection in June.

But a month later the Government changed its mind

and said no funding would be provided until 2011 and cash would be spent on building new council homes up and down the country instead.

Last month, under pressure from Mr Baron and Basildon Council, the Government said an initial £5million would be handed over for 2009/10.

Mr Baron welcomed the Government's announcement, but said he is concerned no timescale for the payout was given.

He said: "Common sense has

prevailed. However, I am worried by the lack of clarity from the Government as to the timescale over which the full investment will be made.

"I am, therefore, pressing the Government for an answer."

Basildon councillor for communities Andrew Baggott said the commitment meant nothing unless the Government revealed how much money it will release each year.

Mr Baggott said: "It would have been better news if he had given a timetable so we could start planning repairs.

"As with all these things, the devil is in the detail."

CELEBS



Robbie's Take That reunion

ROBBIE Williams has said there are plans for him to perform with Take That again.

Asked by Jonathan Ross whether he would be working with the band, Williams said: "Yes, I hope so."

"We've got together, done bits and bobs. I can't say much."



Katie on fire

KATIE Price has been unveiled as the inspiration for a celebrity guy which will be burnt at the stake at a famous bonfire celebration this weekend. The 27ft-tall firework-filled effigy, will go

